State of Arkansas and Hennepin County, Minnesota

Improving Participation in Food Stamps: Strategies and Challenges

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Each year since the enactment of the federal welfare reform in 1996, participation in the Food Stamp Program (FSP) and Medicaid, two of the nation’s most important safety net programs, has declined nationwide. Although large numbers of cash assistance recipients have moved off the welfare rolls and into work, research suggests that in some states many low-income families with children are not receiving the food stamp and Medicaid benefits they are eligible for and which could support their transition to self-sufficiency.

To examine the enhancements and barriers to initial and continuous participation in the Food Stamp Program, Medicaid, and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture commissioned Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) to conduct research involving case studies of state- and local-level implementation of these programs. This report presents the findings from case studies in two states, Arkansas and Minnesota, that have implemented promising practices and policies to increase enrollment in the FSP. Identifying and describing practices that are likely to decrease the potential for reduced participation in the FSP may be useful to states that seek improvements in this area.

Arkansas was selected for the study because the state has experienced the third smallest decline in Food Stamp caseloads in the nation following welfare reform in 1996. The state has also experienced low FSP quality control error rates and has adopted many policies and procedures to improve access to food stamps. Crittenden County, Arkansas was chosen for the local office visit because of its success implementing FSP policy options.

Minnesota was chosen as a case study site because of an innovative outreach program for the FSP in Hennepin County, called Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach. The project provides outreach and application assistance for food stamps through Medicaid outstation sites in greater Minneapolis. The project also partners the local Economic Assistance Department (EAD) with the University of Minnesota Extension Service Simply Good Eating (SGE) program, which provides education on nutrition, food safety, meal planning and preparation, and food budgeting to low-income audiences in the community.

Arkansas and Minnesota have taken two different approaches in order to increase enrollment and participation in the FSP. Arkansas has focused primarily on policy changes and administrative simplification while Minnesota has primarily focused on outreach. Because of the lack of information on which types of strategies are most effective in increasing enrollment in the FSP, it is important to highlight both. This section summarizes our key findings, upcoming or recent initiatives, and suggestions for the future.
A. ARKANSAS—STATE POLICIES PROMOTE PARTICIPATION IN FOOD STAMPS

1. Promoting Participation in the FSP

Food stamp policymakers in Arkansas have been proactive and flexible in designing policies to improve enrollment in food stamps. Arkansas has clear goals at the state level to develop FSP policy that increases enrollment and retention in food stamps, while at the same time promoting accuracy and easing the administrative burden on workers. These policies have been implemented well in Crittenden County.

Dedication at the State Level to a Simpler, More Flexible, and Accurate Food Stamp Program. The state designs policies to meet three goals for the FSP: (1) remove barriers to enrollment, (2) reduce case worker loads, and (3) improve payment accuracy. The state takes a flexible approach to FSP policy in order to improve the food stamp program—for example, they use the most liberal vehicle rules and verification policies possible.

Quarterly Reporting Supports Retention in the FSP. Prior to the federal option, Arkansas obtained a waiver to use quarterly reporting (QR) for families with and without earnings. This policy simplifies the process of maintaining FSP benefits and is used by 65 percent of FSP clients. Clients submit a 2-page quarterly report form by mail. However, the effectiveness of QR is reduced by the requirement that workers request verification of income changes reported for other programs during a QR period, jeopardizing clients' food stamps.

Policies to Ensure Ongoing Access to Food Stamps. The state has set a target of 80 percent for the proportion of families leaving TANF who retain FSP and Medicaid benefits. To meet this goal, supervisors review reports of TANF closures to ensure that food stamps or Medicaid were not terminated improperly. Supervisors also review quarterly reporting closures to make sure closures are not due to delay or error in processing.

2. Upcoming Initiatives

In January 2002 the state expects to begin rolling out the Arkansas Networked System for Welfare Eligibility and Reporting (ANSWER), which will simplify the intake and case management processes for all programs. For example, ANSWER will include: a shorter, combined application for all benefits, combined with an interactive interview; automated eligibility determination by the computer system to replace the manual process that is presently used; and training of caseworkers in all programs so that families will only have one caseworker.

In addition, Arkansas continues to focus on improving access to food stamps in other ways. For example, the state plans to implement three months of transitional food stamp benefits. The

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1 Enhanced funding for low food stamp error rates was used primarily to fund the development of ANSWER.
state has also submitted a waiver for semi-annual FSP reporting that would include families with and without earnings. And in December 2001, the state rolled out a new combined quarterly report form used for both food stamps and Medicaid.

To improve FSP outreach, the state is filling a position for client education (for all programs) and is developing a “client eligibility sheet,” distributed with applications, which outlines basic eligibility guidelines for the FSP. There are also long-range plans to simplify the notices sent to food stamp clients.

3. Suggestions for Improvement

Arkansas is in the process of implementing a number of policy and procedural changes that will improve access to the Food Stamp Program. We present an additional suggestion for the state’s consideration. The state could investigate the possibility of accepting a report of a change from another program without requiring additional verification for food stamps. Reported changes would be acted upon, but the family would not lose FSP eligibility for failure to provide verification. Currently, since workers have to act on and obtain verifications for changes reported for other programs, families may lose food stamp eligibility during a QR period; this reduces the effect of the broad QR policy.

B. HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA—LINKING HEALTH AND NUTRITION THROUGH COMMUNITY OUTREACH

1. Promoting Participation in the FSP

Hennepin County, Minnesota, has begun an innovative program, Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach, that aims to increase knowledge of and enrollment in the FSP and to change the public perception of the FSP from a welfare program to a nutrition assistance program. Through the program, Hennepin County is using established Medicaid outstation sites to screen for potential eligibility and provide application assistance for food stamps, and has partnered with a nutrition education program to help change the perception of the program, as well as provide outreach.

Altering the Perception of the FSP from a Welfare Program to a Nutrition-Based Program. Through the partnership with the Simply Good Eating nutrition education program, the FSP is promoted as a nutrition assistance program rather than a welfare program. SGE brings education-focused experience and outreach and marketing expertise to the program. For example, SGE has helped the county develop outreach materials such as posters and screening forms. Although SGE does not provide applications or application assistance, they provide education about the program in a nutritional context and screen for potential eligibility for food stamps, referring interested families to the outreach program coordinator.

Application Assistance for the FSP. Allowing clients to apply for food stamps at the community-based Medicaid outstation sites may reduce the stigma and hassle of applying at the county office, and eases the process by helping clients with the application and the needed documentation. Families receive assistance with a complicated application and help with
submitting needed verifications. However, even with assistance, the long combined application (used for TANF, food stamps, and Medicaid) was seen as a barrier to outreach.

**Short, Simple Screening Tool for Potential Food Stamp Eligibility.** A one-page screening tool provides a quick way to determine potential eligibility and allows clients to avoid the long FSP application if they are not likely to be eligible. However, there appeared to be missed opportunities for using the screening tool at the Medicaid outstation sites; staff only use the screening tool to determine potential eligibility when clients express an interest in food stamps on their own.

2. **Upcoming Initiatives**

Following the site visit in June 2001, the Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach program added another outstation site, bringing the total number of sites to five. The new outstation site will perform screening and make referrals, but will not provide application assistance. The program is also trying to increase its communications with local food banks (known as food shelves in Minnesota). The program coordinator initially met with food shelf representatives, and did not feel these organizations were interested in participating as outstation sites in a county-run program. However, the program was able to hang some of its posters in the food shelves, and by August 2001 had received three applications for stand-alone food stamps (two were approved), from persons who had seen the program poster hanging in food shelves. In addition, the SGE program was discussing offering SGE courses at the food shelves.

3. **Suggestions**

The Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach program was very new at the time of the visit and a small number of applications had been translated into successful enrollment in the program through the outstation sites. While the state continues to explore partnerships with new outreach sites, the site visit team identified a few areas the program might wish to address that could aid in the program’s growth.

To reduce missed opportunities to screen for food stamps using the short screening tool, the program might consider developing guidelines for the outstation sites to administer the screening tool more systematically. The program could also track and assess potential FSP eligibility for families who have received Medicaid but not food stamps through outstation sites, in order to get a sense of missed opportunities.

To address fear of potential deportation in immigrant communities, the program could also provide more education to outstation workers about what the INS reporting requirements do and do not require; for example, they could ensure that workers know that immigrants can choose not to provide Social Security numbers and immigration status information for persons in their households who do not want benefits. This may help reduce concerns of outstation workers about promoting the FSP.

Finally, the county and SGE should continue to pursue opportunities for outreach at, and collaboration with, local food shelves. The food shelves are a promising venue for food stamp
outreach. A survey conducted by Hunger Solutions Minnesota of food shelf and on-site meal clients found that statewide, 37 percent of food shelf clients were receiving food stamps, but 89 percent appeared income eligible.\textsuperscript{2} Among those who were not participating in food stamps, top reasons given for not applying to the program were: not thinking they were eligible (20 percent) and not wanting to be on welfare (11 percent). The Linking Health and Nutrition program may be able to help change these perceptions.

I. CONTEXT

A. INTRODUCTION

The 1996 federal welfare reform law, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which sets time limits on benefits and requires increasing numbers of clients to participate in work-related activities, was designed to encourage families to leave cash assistance for work and thereby reduce the welfare rolls. Aware that the new legislation might negatively affect access to Medicaid, policymakers enacted Section 1931 to delink Medicaid from welfare. Nevertheless, Medicaid enrollment has declined at a rate higher than expected since 1996, leading federal and state policy makers concerned that enrollment has indeed been affected by changes in cash assistance programs. Similar concerns have been raised over the dramatic drop in Food Stamp Program (FSP) participation.

To examine the enhancements and barriers to initial and continuous participation in the Food Stamp Program, Medicaid, and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Agriculture commissioned Mathematica Policy Research (MPR) to conduct research involving case studies of state- and local-level implementation of these programs. One objective of the case studies was to learn about and profile innovative policies and practices that enhance enrollment and ongoing participation in the Medicaid and FSP by TANF and other eligible low-income families.

In this report we focus on two states, Arkansas and Minnesota, that have implemented promising practices and policies to increase enrollment in food stamps. Arkansas was selected because the state has experienced the third smallest decline in Food Stamp caseloads in the nation following welfare reform in 1996—FSP enrollment declined only 7.8 percent from August 1996 to August 1998. The state has also experienced low FSP quality control error rates. The state has adopted many policies and procedures to improve access to food stamps. For example, the state obtained a waiver to use quarterly reporting for families without earnings, as well as those with earnings, which reduces the reporting burden on families. MPR researchers chose Crittenden County, Arkansas for the local office visit because of its success implementing FSP policy options.

Minnesota was chosen as a case study site because of an innovative outreach program for the FSP in Hennepin County, called Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach. The project provides outreach and application assistance for food stamps through Medicaid outstation sites in greater Minneapolis. The project also partners the local Economic Assistance Department (EAD) with the University of Minnesota Extension Service Simply Good Eating (SGE) program, which provides education on nutrition, food safety, meal planning and preparation, and food budgeting to low-income audiences in the community. The Linking

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Health and Nutrition program was funded in November 2000 and began at pilot sites in January 2001; at the time of the site visit, the pilot had been operating for six months.

This report describes the policies and programs in Arkansas and Minnesota that encourage participation in the FSP, and specifically how the policies and programs are implemented in Crittenden and Hennepin counties. In this section we describe our research methods and present an overview of state TANF and FSP policies. Section II presents our findings on Arkansas’ efforts to increase enrollment in the Food Stamp Program; Section III presents our findings on the outreach program in Hennepin County, Minnesota. Section IV summarizes our findings and conclusions.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

To assess the practices and policies that may promote or inhibit access to and participation in the FSP, research teams conducted three-day site visits in Arkansas and Minnesota. In Arkansas, a three-person research team spent two days visiting the Crittenden County Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) and local outreach sites, and one day in Little Rock meeting with state policy and operations staff and advocates in August 2001. In Minnesota, a two-person research team spent three days at the Hennepin County Economic Assistance Department (EAD) and local outreach sites in June 2001. The objective of the site visits and interviews was to gather information from a diverse array of state and county program managers, county workers, and community officials, and understand their perspectives on how and why potentially eligible clients may or may not apply for and enroll in the programs of interest.

The research team analyzed a variety of state and county-specific factors. Interviews with state personnel focused on the policies, state options, and state-level implementation of the programs. The onsite visit to the local offices focused on workflow, caseflow processing, office composition, and the policies and regulations related to food stamps and TANF. The research team analyzed the general approach and identified the specific strategies currently in use to improve program enrollment and retention, with the aim of documenting the county’s experiences and lessons learned in the implementation of these practices.

Data collection methods that were used in the study included individual semi-structured interviews with:

- State food stamp and Medicaid policy experts and administrators
- County administrators and supervisors
- TANF, food stamp, and Medicaid case managers and front desk staff
- Representatives from community outreach and advocacy organizations
Other data collected activities included:

- Focus groups with current and former TANF, food stamp, and Medicaid clients
- Case reviews with workers
- Job shadowing workers during both initial application and recertification interviews with clients
- Observation of the reception areas and front desks in the local office

C. OVERVIEW OF STATE POLICY

1. Arkansas’ TANF Program: TEA

Arkansas provides cash assistance under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families block grant to low-income families with dependent children through its Temporary Employment Assistance (TEA) program. The state’s TANF caseloads have declined approximately 54 percent between 1994 and June 2000, roughly the same as the national TANF caseload decline. As of May 2001, 11,767 families received TEA in Arkansas, about half of which are child-only cases.

To be eligible for TANF cash assistance, a family must contain a child living with a parent or relative. Applicants and recipients in two-parent families are eligible on the same basis as single-parent families. Arkansas’ approach to determining eligibility and amount of benefits differs from that used in most states. If a family is eligible, it either receives a full or half grant, depending upon the amount of the family’s income. In determining a family's eligibility and the benefit amount, the state uses two income thresholds, which are the same for all families and do not vary by family size. However, the amount of the full or half grant that a family receives varies incrementally based on family size. For example, the maximum TEA benefit in Arkansas is $204 a month for a family of three, or 17 percent of the 2001 federal poverty guidelines (FPL).

- **A $223 Net Monthly Income Threshold.** If a family, regardless of size, has net income above $223, it is ineligible for TEA. In determining the amount of a family’s net income, Arkansas disregards 20 percent of earnings for TEA applicants and recipients. For TEA recipients, Arkansas also disregards an additional 60 percent of the remainder. For example, a family of three receiving TEA would become ineligible with earnings of $700 per month (57 percent FPL) because its net income after both disregards exceeds $223. A family applying for TEA would be ineligible with earnings of $280 per month (23 percent FPL).

- **A $446 Gross Monthly Income Threshold.** This standard is used to determine whether an eligible family receives a full grant or a half grant. If, regardless of family size, a family’s gross income before disregards exceeds $446, and the family is otherwise eligible, it will receive a half grant. If the family’s gross income is below
$446 and the family is otherwise eligible, it will receive a full grant. For example, a TEA family of three with earnings of $690 per month would qualify for a half grant of $102.\textsuperscript{4}

Clients apply for TEA at the county DHS by submitting a four-page (front and back of two pages) combined application form that is used for TEA cash and TEA Medicaid (1931 Medicaid). In measuring need for TEA, Arkansas limits countable assets to $3,000. Arkansas excludes the value of the first vehicle entirely, but counts the fair market value of any additional vehicles toward the $3,000 limit on assets.

TANF benefits are reviewed every 12 months. Arkansas imposes a 24-month time limit on TEA benefits.\textsuperscript{5} The time clock began to run in July 1998 and families first began to reach time limits in July 2000. To date, the number of families reaching time limits has not been large.

2. Arkansas’ Food Stamp Program

The Food Stamp Program is a federal entitlement program for low-income individuals administered through the states and, in Arkansas, the Department of Human Services’ county offices. Federal rules governing eligibility for food stamps require that recipients have incomes below 130 percent of the federal poverty level and meet asset tests and other procedural requirements. Between August 1996 and August 1998, Arkansas experienced a FSP caseload decline of a little less than 8 percent—the third lowest in the country and substantially less than the national average of 24 percent.

While most FSP eligibility policies are established federally, there are some areas where states have options. Arkansas has chosen some of these options.

- Effective July 2001, Arkansas took advantage of the new federal option to conform FSP treatment of a car to the state’s TANF policy and exclude the value of a household’s first car entirely. For any additional vehicles in the household, Arkansas follows the federal food stamp policy.

- In accordance with federal law, Arkansas continues to count the full value of TANF benefits in computing a family’s food stamps, even if the benefits have been reduced

\textsuperscript{4} The computation in this example goes as follows: $690 is reduced by 20 percent and then by another 60 percent for net income of $221. Since the net income is below $223, this family qualifies for TEA benefits (half grant of $102) even though its net income exceeds the full TEA benefit amount for its family size ($204).

\textsuperscript{5} Arkansas is also tracking families according to the federal 60-month time limit, as many families may receive benefits for more than 24 months because of the state’s exemption or extension policies.
or terminated due to noncompliance with TANF work requirements. Although Arkansas must impose certain FSP sanctions related to noncompliance with work or other behavioral requirements, the state has not, however, elected to adopt any of the optional FSP sanctions.

- Arkansas has extended “categorical eligibility” for food stamps to certain families who have left TEA. Specifically, all families are eligible for case management services for one year after leaving TEA and are thus categorically eligible for food stamps, as are former TEA families receiving child care (available for up to three years after leaving TEA).\(^6\)

In Arkansas, individuals apply for food stamps at the DHS county office by submitting an eight-page (both sides of four pages) food stamp application that is not used for any other benefits. About 65 percent of the food stamp households are certified for 12 months and must file three quarterly reports during the certification period. (Some food stamp households are certified for 24 months with a requirement to file a 12-month report; others households may have short certification periods of three or six months.) Quarterly reporting is available, but not limited, to households with earnings. On these quarterly reports, households must report earnings and, if they exceed $25, changes in unearned income or shelter costs. To be recertified, families are required to have an in-person interview unless they meet hardship requirements.

3. Minnesota’s TANF Program: MFIP

The TANF program in Minnesota is known as the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). The program is unique in that it combines a cash grant with a food benefit; that is, families receiving cash assistance automatically receive food stamps as part of their benefit. MFIP began as a demonstration program in seven counties in 1993, and became statewide in January 1998.\(^7\) The state makes an effort to keep MFIP and federal FSP policies in line as much as possible. Between December 1997 and August 2000, the statewide MFIP caseload declined 12 percent (from 47,880 to 42,170 families).

Applicants to MFIP must apply in person and fill out a 36-page combined application form (CAF), also used for the FSP, Medicaid, Emergency and Diversionary Assistance, and other state-funded programs.\(^8\) The MFIP benefit is a flat grant based on household size. Families with no earned income are eligible to receive up to the “transitional standard,” which as of October 2001 for a single-parent family of three is $831 per month; $532 is the cash benefit and $299 is

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\(^{6}\) Categorically eligible households do not have to meet tests for resources, gross and net income, or residency, but still have to have their income budgeted to determine the FSP benefit.

\(^{7}\) The authority for MFIP comes from a combination of waivers of federal Food Stamp Act statute and rules pursuant to state law.

\(^{8}\) The CAF was condensed to 16 pages in August 2001, following the site visit.
the food benefit. Families with employment income have a different standard, the “family wage level”: $914, with $615 cash and $299 food. As income rises, the cash portion of the benefit is reduced, and then the food portion.

There is no gross income test for MFIP. Applicants and recipients have different income and resource tests. To qualify, applicants must have countable income below the transitional standards. Applicants have an earned income disregard of 18 percent per month. Recipients have a higher earnings disregard of 38 percent. There are no shelter cost deductions in MFIP.9 The asset test for applicants is $2,000, and for recipients, $5,000. A vehicle with a loan value of $7,500 or less is excluded from countable resources. MFIP has a 30-day state residency requirement.

Although the MFIP benefit is composed of a cash and a food portion, recipients are allowed to “opt out” of the cash portion of their MFIP grant. Clients who opt out receive the food portion of the grant only, and keep receiving benefits related to MFIP, such as child care assistance, as long as they comply with the MFIP work requirements. Opting out stops the TANF time clock. Clients can opt out for as long as they like, but they cannot have been sanctioned at the time and must have been enrolled in MFIP for at least six months.

MFIP recipients are subject to monthly reporting requirements. Families submit a three-page household report form (HRF) each month. Families with no income are not subject to the monthly reporting requirement; these families report every 6 months. MFIP recipients are recertified every 12 months and it is a county option to require a face-to-face interview.

Minnesota imposes a 60-month time limit on receipt of MFIP. There are exemptions for those who are disabled or caring for an ill or incapacitated family member; those who are hard to employ; and those who are working but not earning enough to support a family. Recipients will begin to reach time limits in July 2002; the state estimates that 5,600 families will reach the time limit between July 2002 and June 2003.

4. Minnesota’s Food Stamp Program

Due to the state’s unique TANF program, families in Minnesota can receive food assistance through two programs: MFIP and the federal FSP, referred to as “stand-alone” food stamps in the state.

Eligibility in the food stamp program is based on federal requirements. Families with gross income less than 130 percent FPL qualify and there is a 20 percent earnings deduction. In Minnesota, families in which at least one member is eligible to receive transitional child care, basic sliding-fee child care, or MFIP employment services, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) households are categorically eligible for stand-alone food stamps. In June 2001, the state

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9 However, the food portion of the benefit takes into account average shelter costs in the state.
adopted the federal option excluding any vehicle with an equity value of $1,500 or less from countable assets. Families who qualify for expedited issuance receive benefits through the stand-alone FSP.

Applicants for food stamps must apply in person and complete the CAF. The first part of the application is also used to screen applicants for expedited food stamps. Benefits to most clients are provided through an EBT card that is automatically recharged each month with benefits. Stand-alone food stamps uses the same reporting requirements as MFIP monthly reporting and annual recertifications. Clients with no earned income must file reports every six months.
II. FINDINGS: PROMOTING ACCESS TO FOOD STAMPS IN ARKANSAS

A. STATE GOALS AND APPROACHES

Since welfare reform, the caseload decline in Arkansas' Food Stamp Program has been much lower than the national average—from 1994 to June 2000, the state's FSP cases dropped by 10 percent. Arkansas also has one of the highest payment accuracy rates in the country, and a 96 percent timeliness rate.

There are three main goals of the FSP program in Arkansas: (1) remove barriers to enrollment, (2) reduce case worker loads, and (3) improve payment accuracy. The state does not feel that these goals are in conflict with one another. The overriding philosophy in the FSP in Arkansas is to avoid being punitive. The state aims to make payments as generous, and to allow as many people eligible for food stamps, as possible.

To achieve these goals, the state uses several strategies. For example, broad quarterly reporting for families with and without earnings and 12-month recertification periods help minimize families’ reporting burdens and reduces trips to the county office. The state feels that “paper flow” works better than “people flow.”

Ten years ago, the largest counties in the state (called “high impact counties”) formed a committee to develop initiatives to improve accuracy rates and timeliness. In addition, the state's food stamp and quality control units report to the same director. The state builds into policy ways to address those parts of the FSP that are error prone and to limit exposure to quality control errors.

The state also conducts outreach for the FSP. For example, policy staff gave a presentation to the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff and the cooperative extension service on how to screen for potential FSP eligibility. In addition, all county supervisors attend community meetings to talk about the program.

1. Quarterly Reporting

Arkansas implemented a waiver for quarterly reporting with yearly recertification in 1995.\(^{10}\) The waiver applied to families with and without earnings. The state considers QR to be integral to their main FSP goals. Quarterly reporting helps families retain food stamps by reducing the paperwork and reporting burden on families and case managers.

Quarterly reporting is used by 65 percent of clients on food stamps, including TEA and non-TEA recipients. The two-page (front and back) QR form asks households to report changes in

\(^{10}\) The waiver was requested in 1993 and implemented in 1995 for non-public assistance households; the state later included the AFDC population.
earned income, unearned income if there was a change over $25, and changes in shelter costs of $25 or more. (This form is included as Appendix A to this report.) During enrollment, workers train clients on how to fill out QR forms and the necessary verifications, so that clients know what they need to do to stay on the FSP. Clients also receive a six-page booklet explaining quarterly reporting and how to fill out the form. The booklet also explains that clients may want to report changes that may result in an increase in food stamp benefits before their QR form is due.

The QR process is used by the state to comply with the Income Eligibility Verification System (IEVS). The state implemented a waiver that allows workers to check information from Social Security, etc. when processing the QR form, so they do not have to do additional cross matches to comply with IEVS requirements.

One limitation to the effectiveness of quarterly reporting noted by the site visit team is the federal FSP rule requiring case workers to request verifications for changes reported for other programs such as TANF and Medicaid. This rule lessens the usefulness of QR in helping families retain benefits. While FSP recipients on QR are not required to notify caseworkers about changes between reports, workers must act on reports of changes from other programs during QR periods. If a client fails to provide documentation, he or she may lose food stamps. For example, if a client also receiving TANF reports a new job or increased earnings (as is required for TANF), the FSP case manager must contact the client for proof of earnings even if it is not time for their quarterly report. If the client cannot be reached, the case manager will call the employer in the case record to obtain verification, and will adjust FSP eligibility and benefits as necessary. However, if the case manager cannot obtain verification from the client or other sources, the food stamp case will be closed for failure to provide the requested verification.

2. **Flexibility in Policy to Promote Food Stamps**

Arkansas is proactive and flexible in designing policies to improve enrollment in food stamps. For example, the state instituted a Simplified Food Stamp Program in 2000, but ended the program when it was apparent that some families were being inadvertently terminated from food stamps when leaving TANF. The state returned to its previous application system for food stamps, and extended categorical eligibility for food stamps for one year after TEA closure. The state felt this system would better promote enrollment and accuracy in the FSP.

The state tries to use the most liberal vehicle rules possible in determining FSP eligibility. Their policy is a mix of TANF and FSP policy: the first car uses the TANF policy, and the second car uses the FSP exclusions first, and then looks at what is used for work/school (in accordance with TANF rules). The state has also increased the utility standard used in computing food stamps from $172 to $195, by incorporating more of the winter months in the calculation.

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11 The Simplified Food Stamp Program allowed states to merge food stamp and TANF eligibility criteria into one set of rules for families participating in both programs.
For expedited food stamps, the state uses the most liberal verification method within the federal regulations—the only thing an applicant needs to verify is their identity. For regular food stamps, the state requires only federally mandated verifications. Case workers are told to use discretion when they cannot verify something.

At the time of the site visit, Arkansas was planning to institute three months of transitional food stamp benefits for families leaving TANF, following Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval of the federal option. The state is also trying to obtain a waiver to allow semi-annual reporting for FSP clients with and without earnings.

B. PROMOTING FOOD STAMPS IN CRITTENDEN COUNTY, ARKANSAS

Crittenden County was identified by the state as a county that has successfully implemented FSP policies, such as quarterly reporting. The county has had one of the smallest declines in FSP enrollment in the state.

The county conducts a number of outreach approaches to promote the FSP. The county DHS distributes applications at many places, including the Social Security Administration office, the hospital, mental health centers, schools, health departments, and career centers. The county works closely with staff at a local One-Stop career center. A DHS worker visits the center each Thursday to discuss and take applications for all benefits (TEA, Medicaid and food stamps).

Crittenden County also promotes the FSP through work with the Cooperative Extension Service's Nutrition Education program. Nutrition educators visit the DHS office during food stamp electronic benefits transfer (EBT) training and QR information sessions. The local office also distributes nutrition education brochures.

County workers themselves also conduct activities to promote enrollment in the Food Stamp Program. New case managers, who tend to have lighter caseloads, review their case files to identify existing clients who may be eligible for but not enrolled in the FSP or Medicaid. Workers send the family a letter and an application. Case managers in Crittenden County also try to inform clients that they can still keep food stamps after employment. Workers give brochures to FSP and TANF clients explaining that working families can receive food stamps. As one case worker said, “If they are eligible, we want them to get food stamps.”

During the case management process, county supervisors review QR closures to make sure closures are not due to delay or error in processing. This policy is particularly important as the computer system will automatically close a food stamp case if the case manager does not

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12 OMB approved this option following our site visit.

13 County staff reported that 75 percent of completed FSP applications are brought in to the office.
recertify it before the closure date. In other words, if there is a delay in processing a quarterly report, a case may be closed inappropriately.

Also, the state has set a target of 80 percent for the proportion of families leaving TANF who maintain food stamps and Medicaid one month following closure. The actual figure for food stamps is improving and is currently close to 75 percent. As part of the effort to meet this target, county supervisors review a list of TEA case closures each month. This TEA closure report lists cases with no open food stamps or Medicaid the month following TEA closure; in Crittenden County, the list includes about 30 cases a month. A subset of the cases is reviewed to make sure that the FSP or Medicaid was not closed in error.
III. FINDINGS: PROMOTING ACCESS TO FOOD STAMPS IN MINNESOTA

A. OVERVIEW

As a result of achieving low payment error rates in the Food Stamp Program in 1998, Minnesota received $4.7 million in enhanced funding from USDA in 1999. By state law, 75 percent of these funds went to the counties to be used for anything that enhanced their stand-alone food stamp or MFIP programs. The state retained 25 percent, or $1.4 million, about half of which was used to fund six outreach projects to increase enrollment in the FSP. These projects have no federal restrictions, and receive a 50 percent match from USDA.  

Three of the projects are in rural counties and focus on senior citizens and immigrant populations. The remaining three projects are in more urban areas. One of these projects is the pilot program in Hennepin County, Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach. Hennepin County applied to the state for funds to expand outreach in greater Minneapolis at Medicaid outstation sites to include the FSP. The pilot began in November 2000 and was up for renewal in September 2001; the state expected to renew the outreach project for another year.

The goals of the Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach program, as stated in the grant proposal, are: (1) increase enrollment in the Food Stamp Program by providing FSP information to low income households in Hennepin County; (2) decrease the stigma associated with food stamps by linking the FSP to nutrition instead of “welfare”; and (3) increase the number of low-income households enrolling in the FSP by reducing and removing barriers to participation. The program is partnered with the Simply Good Eating (SGE) program at the University of Minnesota Extension Service, which conducts classes for low-income families on nutrition, meal preparation, food safety, and food budgeting.

Under the program, four community-based organizations that were participating as Medicaid outstation sites agreed to distribute information, screen for eligibility, and provide assistance with food stamp applications. The outstation workers at the sites send completed applications to the program coordinator, who makes sure they are complete, follows up on needed documents, and processes eligibility for food stamps at the county EAD. In addition, Simply Good Eating conducts classes in the community and at the pilot sites that include education on the FSP, but not application assistance; SGE sends referrals for interested clients to the program coordinator, who follows up with the family to complete the application process. The outreach program

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14 The state did not receive enhanced funding in 2000 but expected to receive $6.6 million in 2001. The state hoped to use these funds to maintain, and potentially expand, the outreach projects.

15 Hennepin County uses the term “outstation” to refer to sites that distribute and provide assistance with applications, and submit to applications to the county office, but do not process eligibility; participating staff at these sites are referred to as outstation workers, but they are not county staff.
provides application assistance for the federal FSP (stand-alone food stamps), but not for food benefits through the TANF program (MFIP).

The Hennepin County EAD outreach supervisor oversees the pilot program. There is one full-time coordinator (an EAD intake worker) who is responsible for the training of outstation workers, developing protocols, following up on verifications and applications, processing applications and determining eligibility, and providing ongoing assistance and training to the outstation sites and to SGE educators. The county pays each site $20 per stand-alone FSP application (the combined application form, or CAF) or medical application (the health care combined application, or HCAPP) they submit, regardless of whether the applicant is found eligible. Sites receive payment from the county quarterly.

Three outstation sites and the Simply Good Eating program received training in January 2001; a fourth site received training in May 2001. In the first eight months of operation from January to August 2001, the three original outstation sites and Simply Good Eating had taken 35 applications, 19 of which resulted in enrollment in the FSP.

1. Outreach Providers

As of the site visit in June 2001, Linking Health and Nutrition provided outreach and application assistance through four sites that serve as Medicaid outstation sites (two medical clinics and two community-based social services organizations) and through SGE. Medicaid outstation sites assist applicants with the Medicaid application, but do not process eligibility on-site. Each of the sites wrote a letter of support for the Linking Health and Nutrition grant. Three sites, the Andersen Family Resource Center, the University of Minnesota North Memorial Clinic, and the Simply Good Eating program were visited during the site visit, and are the focus of this report. This section provides background on the outstation sites.

a. Simply Good Eating Program

Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach partners the Hennepin County Economic Assistance Department with the SGE Program at the University of Minnesota Extension Services. SGE is unique in that it works with low-income clients in the areas of food safety, food budgeting, meal planning, and food preparation. SGE courses consist of eight one-hour sessions and teach participants not just general nutrition, but some of the skills related to putting healthy food on the table. To qualify for SGE, a family must be receiving one or more of certain programs (e.g., food stamps, reduced lunch), or the program works with families through programs that they know are serving a low-income audience (e.g., Head Start, urban halfway house, transitional housing for homeless). The program hires and trains peer educators from the

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16 The primary funding source for SGE is federal, from the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).
community, called Nutritional Education Assistants (NEAs). The program has 16 NEAs and 2 program coordinators.

SGE provides FSP outreach through its own courses, conducts classes at the other pilot sites, and works with the county in developing outreach tools such as a screening form, brochures, and posters. The program does not provide application assistance, but refers interested clients to the Linking Health and Nutrition program coordinator, who contacts the families about completing the application. Between January and August 2001, SGE made about 40 referrals to the program coordinator, four of which resulted in applications for food stamps, and two of which resulted in enrollment.

b. Medicaid Outstation Sites

The site visit team visited two of the four Medicaid outstation sites participating in the Linking Health and Nutrition program. The first, the Andersen Family Resource Center, is located in the Andersen Elementary School in south-central Minneapolis.17 The Resource Center uses “peer parents” from the local community to provide outreach and application assistance for Medicaid and food stamps. There are 12 peer parents; two of the peer parents have been trained to provide outreach assistance for food stamps (and the pilot coordinator planned to train seven peer parents in September 2001). Many of the peer parents are bilingual. The Resource Center has been assisting clients with the HCAPP for Medicaid for two years; the center takes approximately 25 HCAPPs per quarter. The center took nine FSP applications between January and August 2001, four of which resulted in enrollment in the FSP.

The second site visited by the research team was the North Memorial Clinic, located in north Minneapolis. The clinic is a residency program in the University of Minnesota and has been serving the north Minneapolis community for 27 years.18 The clinic has two missions: to educate residents and to provide patient care to the community. North Memorial Clinic has been a Medicaid outstation site for two years. There is one patient advocate at the center who provides outreach and assistance for Medicaid and food stamps. The clinic processes, on average, 20 to 25 Medicaid applications per month. It completed seven applications for the FSP between January and August 2001; five of the applicants were eligible and enrolled.

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17 Children at the Andersen school come from the Phillips neighborhood, a culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse area. It is a vibrant neighborhood with many community organizations. However, many families are struggling economically; most of the children in the area are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

18 While not federally funded, the clinic is in a federally designated physician shortage area. The clinic’s patient population is about 40 percent African American, 40 percent white, and 20 percent Hmong, Somali, Southeast Asian, and American Indian. The patients tend to be socio-economically depressed. About 20 percent have private insurance through an employer, but 75 to 80 percent have Medicaid through MA and MinnesotaCare.
The remaining two Medicaid outstation sites participating in the pilot program were not included in the site visit. Seton Services is operated by Catholic Charities, and offers services primarily to pregnant women and young people, such as pregnancy classes, child care, adoption, infant foster care, and support to women on TANF. There are four different locations and four employees, who are either social workers or licensed social workers. Abbot Northwestern is the newest outstation site for Linking Health and Nutrition and serves a mainly elderly population. The program coordinator trained a social worker to do outreach at this site. The clinic received training in May 2001, five months after the other sites. Seton Services had submitted 12 applications to the coordinator between January and August 2001, six of which had been enrolled in food stamps. Between May and August 2001, Abbot Northwestern had submitted three applications to the coordinator, two of which resulted in enrollment in food stamps.

B. REDEFINING THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM—PARTNERSHIP WITH SIMPLY GOOD EATING PROGRAM

The county’s partnership with the Simply Good Eating program is an innovative approach to outreach for food stamps. SGE educators introduce the FSP in SGE classes in the context of nutrition and healthy eating, rather than in the context of a public assistance program. The classes are learner driven; educators do an assessment of what participants are interested in learning about and what they might need to learn about. Program staff view having educators from the community as contributing to the success of SGE; the educators have an appreciation for what the community will like and understand. Educators are mindful as to how they present the FSP as part of the course material. Participants who indicate an interest in the FSP through the screening form, or through communication with the educator following the course, are discretely referred to the pilot program coordinator, who follows up with an application.

Hennepin County EAD and SGE each bring relative strengths to the outreach project. First, the county brings knowledge of the myths and realities of the FSP and knowledge about eligibility. SGE staff reported that there was a lack of knowledge about food stamps among SGE educators, until the Linking Health and Nutrition coordinator provided them with training. For example, SGE workers learned that family members can have a job and still receive food stamps. Second, SGE brings education-focused experience and outreach and marketing; for example, how to teach a topic and how to make it simple and straightforward. SGE helped in the development of the pilot’s screening tool. The form became more “user friendly” and less like a county form. Program posters, titled “Take a Bite Out of Your Food Budget,” in pilot sites were also jointly developed by EAD and SGE, and SGE assisted the pilot coordinator in developing the program’s training module.

Hennepin County EAD and SGE continue to develop their relationship. As part of the partnership between the county and SGE, outstation sites are also supposed to provide information to clients about the SGE program, by distributing the SGE brochure to families interested in food stamps. The screening tool also includes a check box for the client of the outstation sites to request information on SGE. However, SGE staff reported that they do not receive many referrals from the pilot sites. Indeed, at one outstation site, staff reported that outstation workers knew little about SGE. To increase knowledge and communications, SGE and Hennepin County staff and pilot site outstation workers are planning a cook-off so that SGE “comes alive” for workers at the other outstation sites. Staff from SGE and the other food stamp
outstation staff are also getting together for a mid-year report. The two organizations are also working together to develop a food stamp brochure to complement the county’s brochure.

C. SCREENING TOOL FOR FOOD STAMP STAMP ELIGIBILITY

Pilot staff and SGE educators developed a one-page screening tool for outstation workers to use to determine potential eligibility for food stamps. (This screening tool is attached as Appendix B.) The screening tool asks about receipt of public programs (including FSP), and asks basic income and asset questions. It provides a guideline for gross income limits by family size, and contains check boxes (for those not filling it out interactively) to request more information on the FSP and on SGE.

The screening tool provides a quick and easy way to determine potential eligibility for food stamps and avoids completing the long CAF application if the client will not be eligible. Outstation workers liked the screening tool and felt it was easy to fill out with the client. SGE staff reported that the screening tool has been helpful in motivating people to think that it might be worthwhile to apply for food stamps.

There are a number of challenges, however, with implementing the screening tool at pilot sites. First, there are no guidelines for using the screening tool by outstation staff at the Medicaid outstation sites. Nor do outstation workers at these sites have a “script” for discussing the FSP and the nutritional link as an introduction to the screening tool. It did not appear that there was any systematic way at the Medicaid outstation sites to have clients fill out the tool. Second, at all sites, clients fill out a screening tool only if they express an interest in applying for food stamps to an outstation worker. Also, some SGE educators were initially reluctant to give out the screening tool to class participants, for fear of alienating course participants due to stigma associated with the FSP; educators now distribute the screening form to all participants, to avoid embarrassing anyone.19 The program is also planning to edit the screening tool to identify whether interested parties are able to apply for benefits on their own, to reduce the problem of teens who live with their parents applying.

19 SGE plans to add a box to the screening tool for clients who may already be on food stamps, so that they do not have to fill out the whole form. Additionally, the program is tracking the number of participants who do not report food stamp benefits, and will compare this against the number of referral forms.
Another issue with promoting the FSP and distributing screening tools is concern among outstation workers about the state implementation of reporting requirements to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), planned for July 2001.20 A number of outstation workers, especially those at sites with many non-citizen clients, reported that the requirements would discourage their promotion of public programs, especially for food stamps, since eligibility for the program is household based. Said one outstation worker: “The risk is too great for a small food stamp benefit.”

D. COMPLETING THE FOOD STAMP APPLICATION

Application assistance provided by the outstation sites aims to reduce barriers to participation in food stamps. It allows applicants to apply at a location in which they are comfortable. The meeting with the outstation worker counts as the required face-to-face interview for food stamps. Families also receive interactive assistance with the application; at the downtown office, applicants are required to fill out the long application themselves prior to their interview. The program coordinator developed a three-hour training module designed to familiarize outstation workers with the FSP and with the application so that they can confidently take a food stamp application (the CAF) themselves.

However, according to outstation workers, one of the biggest challenges with the food stamp application process through the outstation sites is the application itself. While the Medicaid outstation sites had been trained to complete the four-page combined health-care application, the long application form, the CAF, is new to workers at these sites.21 The time it takes to fill out the application is a barrier to food stamp outreach at the sites. For example, at the medical clinic, clients are often seen minutes before a medical appointment, which does not leave enough time to fill out the CAF. Another issue that was raised by outstation workers is that applications translated into Spanish are not as current as English versions. Outstation workers also reported that once the clients learn about the application process, they sometimes feel that the small benefit is not worth their time. When applications are filled out at outstation sites, they are sent by mail to the pilot coordinator; the coordinator must then check to see if the application is complete and collect any missing verifications. One outstation worker commented that some

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20 At the time of the site visit, Minnesota was preparing to implement a law that required: (1) the use of the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) system for verifying the status of non-citizen applicants, as required by federal law; and (2) a reporting requirement that went beyond federal requirements. The second requirement was repealed in the summer 2001 legislative session following the site visit; only federal reporting requirements will be implemented.

21 Following the site visit, in August 2001 the state introduced a new version of the CAF. The revised application appears to have reduced the number of questions slightly, but has mainly condensed the information from the previous version into 16 pages.
food stamp applicants might be better off applying directly to the county because it would be quicker.\textsuperscript{22}

A major support to the outreach project is the coordinator, who is extremely dedicated to helping clients complete the application process. All pilot site staff members who were interviewed commented on the good job the coordinator is doing. Training outstation workers to fill out the CAF and obtain the needed documentation has been one of the biggest challenges so far in the program, and the learning curve has varied widely by site. The coordinator provides positive feedback and suggestions to the sites, as well as ongoing training. The coordinator also provides follow up to incomplete applications submitted from sites, and schedules in-person interviews with all families referred through SGE.

\textsuperscript{22} Applicants who appear eligible for expedited processing FSP are referred to Century Plaza or to a neighborhood center.
IV. CONCLUSIONS

Arkansas and Minnesota have taken two different approaches in order to increase enrollment and participation in the FSP. Arkansas has focused primarily on policy changes and administrative simplification while Minnesota has primarily focused on outreach. Because of the lack of information on which types of strategies are most effective in increasing enrollment in the FSP, it is important to highlight both. This section summarizes our key findings, upcoming or recent initiatives, and suggestions for the future.

A. ARKANSAS—STATE POLICIES PROMOTE PARTICIPATION IN THE FSP

1. Promoting Participation in the FSP

Food stamp policymakers in Arkansas have been proactive and flexible in designing policies to improve enrollment in food stamps. Arkansas has clear goals at the state level to develop FSP policy that increases enrollment and retention in food stamps, while at the same time promoting accuracy and easing the administrative burden on workers.

- **Dedication at the State Level to a Simpler, More Flexible, and Accurate Food Stamp Program.** The state designs policies to meet three goals for the FSP: (1) remove barriers to enrollment, (2) reduce case worker loads, and (3) improve payment accuracy. The state takes a flexible approach to FSP policy in order to improve the food stamp program—for example, they use the most liberal vehicle rules and verification policies as possible.

- **Quarterly Reporting Supports Retention in the FSP.** Prior to the federal option, Arkansas obtained a waiver to use quarterly reporting for families with and without earnings. This policy simplifies the process of maintaining FSP benefits. However, the effectiveness of QR is reduced by the requirement that workers request verification of income changes reported for other programs during a QR period, jeopardizing clients’ food stamps.

- **Policies to Ensure Ongoing Access to Food Stamps.** The state has a target of 80 percent for the proportion of families leaving TANF who retain FSP and Medicaid benefits. To meet this goal, supervisors review reports of TANF closures to ensure that food stamps or Medicaid were not terminated improperly. Supervisors also review FSP QR closures to make sure closures are not due to delay or error in processing.
2. Upcoming Initiatives

In January 2002 the state expects to begin rolling out the Arkansas Networked System for Welfare Eligibility and Reporting (ANSWER), which will simplify the intake and case management processes for all programs. Under ANSWER:

- Clients will fill out a two-page intake form and have one interactive interview and a short application for all benefits; they will no longer be required fill out separate applications for TANF, Medicaid, and food stamps.

- The computer system will automatically process eligibility for the programs identified through a new unified front end to the existing eligibility system; intake workers will no longer have to do manual budgets and eligibility determinations as they do now.

- Case workers will be cross-trained in all programs; clients will have one case worker for all programs (after a period of implementation), rather than having separate workers for food stamps and Medicaid, as some do now after leaving TANF.

In addition to ANSWER, Arkansas continues to focus on improving access to food stamps in other ways. For example, the state plans to implement three months of transitional food stamp benefits. The state has also submitted a waiver for semi-annual FSP reporting that would include families with and without earnings. And in December 2001, the state rolled out new combined quarterly report form used for both food stamps and Medicaid.

To improve FSP outreach, the state is filling a position for client education (for all programs) and is developing a “client eligibility sheet,” distributed with applications, which outlines basic eligibility guidelines for the FSP. There are also long-range plans to simplify the notices sent to food stamp clients.

3. Suggestions

Arkansas is in the process of implementing a number of policy and procedural changes that will improve access to the Food Stamp Program. We present an additional suggestion for the state’s consideration. The state could investigate the possibility of accepting a report of a change from another program without requiring additional verification for food stamps. Reported changes would be acted upon, but the family would not lose FSP eligibility for failure to provide verification. Currently, since workers have to act on and obtain verifications for changes reported for other programs, families may lose food stamp eligibility during a QR period; this reduces the effect of the broad QR policy.

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23 Enhanced funding for low food stamp error rates was used primarily to fund the development of ANSWER.
B. HENNEPIN COUNTY, MINNESOTA—LINKING HEALTH AND NUTRITION THROUGH COMMUNITY OUTREACH

1. Promoting Participation in the FSP

Hennepin County, Minnesota, has begun an innovative program, Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach, that aims to increase knowledge of and enrollment in the FSP and to change the public perception of the FSP from a welfare program to a nutrition assistance program. Through the program, Hennepin County is using established Medicaid outstation sites to screen for potential eligibility and provide application assistance for food stamps. The site visit team identified several promising aspects of this program.

- **Altering the Perception of the FSP from a Welfare Program to a Nutrition-Based Program.** Through the partnership with the Simply Good Eating nutrition education program, the FSP is promoted as a nutrition assistance program rather than a welfare program. SGE brings education-focused experience and outreach and marketing expertise to the program.

- **Community-Based Sites and One-on-One Assistance Simplify the Application Process for the FSP.** Allowing clients to apply for food stamps at the Medicaid outstation sites may reduce the stigma and hassle of applying at the county office, and eases the process by helping clients with the application and the needed documentation.

- **A Short, Simple Screening Tool for Potential Food Stamp Eligibility.** The screening tool provides a quick way to determine potential eligibility and allows clients to avoid the long CAF application if they are not eligible. However, there appeared to be missed opportunities for using the screening tool at the Medicaid outstation sites.

2. Upcoming Initiatives

Following the site visit in June 2001, the Linking Health and Nutrition program added another outstation site, the Hennepin Care North Clinic. Like SGE, this site will perform screening and make referrals, but will not provide application assistance. The Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach program is also trying to increase its communications with local food banks (known as food shelves in Minnesota). The program coordinator initially met with food shelf representatives, and did not feel these organizations were interested in participating as outstation sites in a county-run program. However, the program was able to hang some of its posters in the food shelves, and by August 2001 had received three applications for stand-alone food stamps (two were approved), from persons who had seen the program poster hanging in food shelves. In addition, the SGE program was discussing offering SGE courses at the food shelves.
3. Suggestions

The Linking Health and Nutrition through Community Outreach program was very new at the time of the visit and a small number of applications had been translated into successful enrollment in the program through the outstation sites. This is not surprising, given that: the outstation sites had just received training months before; there were a limited number of sites and workers; and the sites only process applications for stand-alone food stamps, not for expedited food stamp benefits or for MFIP, the state’s TANF program that combines a cash and food benefit.

To reduce missed opportunities to screen for food stamps using the short screening tool, the program might consider developing guidelines for the outstation sites to administer the screening tool, and might also develop a “script” for outstation workers to use when introducing the screening tool and the FSP. The program could also track and assess potential FSP eligibility for families who have received Medicaid but not food stamps through outstation sites, in order to get a sense of missed opportunities.

The program could provide more education to outstation workers about what the INS reporting requirements do and do not require; for example, they could ensure that workers know that immigrants can choose not to provide Social Security numbers and immigration status information for persons in their households who do not want benefits. This may help reduce concerns of outstation workers about promoting the FSP.

Finally, the county and SGE should continue to pursue opportunities for outreach at, and collaboration with, local food shelves. The food shelves are a promising venue for food stamp outreach. A survey conducted by Hunger Solutions Minnesota of food shelf and on-site meal clients found that statewide, 37 percent of food shelf clients were receiving food stamps, but 89 percent appeared income eligible. Among those who were not participating in food stamps, top reasons given for not applying to the program were: not thinking they were eligible (20 percent) and not wanting to be on welfare (11 percent). The Linking Health and Nutrition program may be able to help change these perceptions.

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APPENDIX A

ARKANSAS' FOOD STAMPS QUARTERLY REPORT FORM
Arkansas Human Services Food Stamp Quarterly Report

This is your Food Stamp Quarterly Report form. Please complete this form, sign it, and return it to the Department of Human Services (DHS) County Office in the enclosed envelope. If you need help filling out the form, call the County Office and ask for help. We will use the information you report on the form to see if your household is still eligible for food stamp benefits. Please return this form as quickly as possible. IF YOUR CASE CLOSES, YOU MUST SUBMIT A NEW APPLICATION BEFORE YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM.

YOUR FOOD STAMP CASE NUMBER IS

IF YOU RETURN THIS FORM AFTER

YOUR FOOD STAMP BENEFITS MAY BE DELAYED FOR

IF YOU DO NOT RETURN THIS FORM BY

YOUR FOOD STAMP CASE WILL CLOSE

THIS IS YOUR ADDRESS:  RETURN THIS FORM TO:

Have you moved from this address? □ YES □ NO □
Is the address shown correct? □ YES □ NO □
If you have moved or the address shown is not correct, complete the information below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street or Rural Route or P.O. Box</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apartment or Lot Number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip Code</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Phone Number</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

List your name and birth date and the names and birth dates of the people who live with you. Use a blank sheet of paper if you need more room to list all household members. Complete the information in the gray area only for new born babies and people who have moved into your home since your last report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Date</th>
<th>Does this person buy food &amp; prepare meals separate from other household members?</th>
<th>Social Security Number</th>
<th>Relationship To You</th>
<th>Citizenship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ YES □ NO □</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>U.S. Citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ YES □ NO □</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ YES □ NO □</td>
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<td>□ YES □ NO □</td>
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<td>□ YES □ NO □</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>□ YES □ NO □</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have moved, enter directions to your home if you now live on a rural route, use a post office box or use an address other than the one for the location where you live.

List your name and date left and what happened. Use a blank sheet of paper if you need more room. Under "What Happened", please tell briefly why the person left your home. For example, if someone moved out, you may write "moved".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date Left</th>
<th>What Happened?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REPORT ALL INCOME FROM WORK HERE.

PART I - Provide information below about each person (including yourself) in your household who works. Use extra paper if more than two people in your household work.

Person's name

Where do they work?

Did they begin this job in the last three months? YES NO

If yes, when did the job start?

Month Day Year

Complete the following information if you or anyone else in the household got laid off, quit a job, got fired, went on sick leave or retired from any job in the last three months.

Person's Name

Employer/Company

Last Day of Work Reason for Leaving Job

YOU MUST SEND PROOF OF ALL EARNED INCOME RECEIVED BY PEOPLE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD. You may send: 1) a check stub for each pay check received in the last 30 days; or 2) a statement from the employer showing date of pay and gross amount of all checks (or cash) received in the last 30 days. Or, take this form to the employer to have PART II below completed. NOTE: YOU MAY SEND PROOF OF INCOME FOR THE LAST SIX WEEKS. THIS WILL HELP US FIGURE YOUR INCOME BETTER. If anyone has stopped working, you must verify the last date of work, the amount of the last pay check and when it was received.

PART II (Completed by employer, if necessary)

Employee Name

Rate of Pay: $ __________ per __________

Employee is paid:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pay Day</th>
<th>Gross Earned (before deductions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every 2 Weeks</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice Each Month</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employer/Payroll Clerk Signature Date Telephone

REPORT ALL INCOME OTHER THAN INCOME FROM WORK HERE. List all checks/money currently received by you or any other household member. Examples: TEA Cash Assistance, Social Security, SSI, VA, unemployment benefits, worker's compensation, child support, military allotments, contributions, yard work, maid work, interest, dividends, pensions, student grants, and loans, etc. Use an extra sheet of paper if necessary.

Name of Person Who Gets this Income Source of this Income (List agency or person) Amount of Income How Often is Income Received? (Monthly, weekly, etc.) Check here if this income started in the last 3 months

$ $ $

If any income listed above has changed by more than $25 since your last application or report, you must provide proof of the new income amount. (We have proof of TEA payments. In most cases, we also have proof of SSI benefits and Arkansas unemployment benefits.) We can accept as proof an award letter or other correspondence from the person/agency who provides the income. We may also be able to accept other documentation which shows your current income amount.

If your income or that of any other household member stopped in the last 3 months, complete the following questions. Also, provide proof of when the income stopped.

Name of person with income Source of income that stopped DateStopped
RESOURCES
You must tell us if the total amount of money that the members of your household have in cash, savings accounts, checking accounts, trust funds, and in stocks and bonds increases to more than $2,000. Enter the total amount here if it is more than $2,000. $

Report all new vehicles here. - List any cars, trucks, boats, vans, campers, and motorcycles or other licensed vehicles any household member has gotten since your last application or report. Use an extra sheet of paper if necessary.

1. Make _______ Model _______ Year _______

2. Make _______ Model _______ Year _______

Did you or someone else in your household trade in or sell any vehicles? If yes, you may wish to report this below. It will help us figure your current resources. Make _______ Model _______ Year _______

SHELTER COSTS
You must report changes in your shelter costs only if you move. We may use your utility expenses to determine the amount of your food stamps.

| Rent $__________ | Telephone (basic rate) $__________ |
| Mortgage Payment $__________ | Electricity |
| (List real estate taxes and insurance costs only if they are not included in your mortgage payment.) | Natural Gas |
| Real Estate Taxes $__________ | Wood |
| Homeowner Insurance $__________ | Butane |
| | Water |
| | Garbage/trash pickup |
| | Sewer |
| | Initial Installation fee |
| | Other (list) |

DEPENDENT CARE COSTS
If you or anyone in your household must pay someone to care for a child or a disabled or elderly person in order to work, attend school, or look for work, you are allowed to report changes in these costs. If you report increases in dependent care costs, you may get more food stamp benefits. You are not required to report changes in dependent care costs.

What is the new cost? _______ How often do you pay this cost? _______

Name of caregiver or day care center? _______ Telephone Number _______

Address of caregiver or day care center _______

Does anyone help pay these costs? NO YES If yes, who? _______

MEDICAL COSTS
We can allow current medical expenses for all household members who are: (1) age 60 or older; or (2) receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits; or (3) receiving Social Security disability payments; or (4) receiving VA benefits due to a total and permanent disability; or (5) receiving certain disability benefits from a state or federal agency. You may wish to report changes in medical expenses although you are not required to do so. If you do report a change, you must provide proof of the change. We cannot consider medical expenses without proof.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Provided</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>How often is each payment due?</th>
<th>Service Provided</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>How often is each payment due?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical and dental care</td>
<td>$__________</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dentures, hearing aids &amp; eyeglasses</td>
<td>$__________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital or Nursing care</td>
<td>$__________</td>
<td></td>
<td>Services of an attendant or nurse</td>
<td>$__________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare/Medipak &amp; other Health Insurance &amp; medical payments</td>
<td>$__________</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transportation costs to get medical care</td>
<td>$__________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs prescribed by a doctor (Please provide a printout from your pharmacy or a list of the drugs you take.)</td>
<td>$__________</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other (explain)</td>
<td>$__________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please list names of household members that have these expenses.
CHILD SUPPORT
Are you or anyone else in your household paying child support to someone living outside your household?
☑ YES ☐ NO
If yes, who pays?
To whom? Name __________________________ Telephone Number ___________________
Address __________________
How much? $ __________________________ How often? __________________________
Are these payments court ordered? ☐ YES ☐ NO
Did the amount you are court ordered to pay change? ☐ YES ☐ NO

PROOF - You must show proof of the court order to pay child support and all payments that were made in the last three months. If you have given us proof of the court ordered amount, then you only have to provide proof of the payments for the last three months.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS
We must have a social security number for each household member. This is required by the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended by P.L. 97-98. Social security numbers are subject to verification by the Social Security Administration. They will be used to check the identity of household members, to prevent duplicate participation, and to facilitate mass changes. They may be used to select your household for a review or an audit. This may involve contacting your employer, bank or other parties.

PENALTY WARNING
Information on this form is subject to verification by federal, state and local officials and through the state Income and Eligibility Verification System and computer cross-matching with other Agencies. This information may also be submitted to the Immigration & Naturalization Service for verification. If information is found to be incorrect, your eligibility and benefit level may be affected, your food stamp benefits may be stopped, and you may be subject to criminal prosecution for knowingly providing incorrect information.

- Do not give false information or hide information to get or continue to get food stamp benefits.
- Do not trade or sell food stamp benefits.
- Do not use food stamp benefits to buy ineligible items such as alcoholic drinks and tobacco.
- Do not use someone else's food stamp benefits for your household.

If you receive food stamp benefits, you must follow the rules listed above. Any member of your household who intentionally breaks any of these rules will be disqualified from the Food Stamp Program for one year for the first violation, two years for the second violation, and permanently for the third violation; may be fined up to $250,000 or imprisoned for up to 20 years or both, and is subject to federal prosecution and penalties. Federal penalties include an additional disqualification period of 18 months, and, for second and subsequent felony convictions for Food Stamp Program fraud, a mandatory jail sentence.

Individuals found guilty in a federal, state, or local court of trading food stamp benefits for controlled substances will be subject to permanent disqualification. Individuals found guilty by a court of trading firearms, ammunition or explosives for food stamp benefits will be subject to permanent disqualification.

Individuals who make fraudulent statements or representations about their identity or residence in order to get food stamp benefits in two locations the same month will be barred from getting food stamp benefits for ten years.

Fleeing felons and probation/parole violators are ineligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program.

YOUR SIGNATURE (sign below)
My answers on this form are correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand the penalties for hiding or giving false information. I understand I will owe the value of any extra food stamp benefits I receive if I do not fully report changes in my household.
To verify information contained in this report, I hereby authorize my employer(s), any banks, savings and loans, lending institutions, etc., and/or Federal or State agencies to release to DHS any information about me or my circumstances.

SIGN HERE ____________________________ TODAY'S DATE ____________
DCO-265 (08/97)
APPENDIX B

LINKING HEALTH AND NUTRITION THROUGH COMMUNITY OUTREACH FOOD STAMP SCREENING FORM
NAME: ______________________________________________________

1. Do you now receive food stamps?  □ Yes  □ No

2. Do you and everyone who lives with you get Supplemental Security Income (SSI)?
   □ Yes  □ No

3. Do you currently receive or are you on a waiting list for either transitional childcare or subsidized childcare assistance programs?
   □ Yes  □ No

4. Do you now get help from an MFIP employment service provider (ESP)?
   □ Yes  □ No

If you answered “Yes” to Questions 2-4, you may be eligible for food stamps.
If you answered “No” to one or more questions, then go on to Questions 5-8.

5. Do you have any cash on-hand, or money in the bank, or an Individual Retirement Account?
   □ Yes  □ No  If “Yes”, how much is it?  5.  $_____

6. What is your income per month before taxes?  6a.  $_____
   (Enter the amount on Line 6a).

   Subtract Line 6a from Line 5.  6b.  $_____

7. Is 6b less than $2000?  □ Yes  □ No

8. Use the income you entered in Question 6. When counting the people who live with you, count only you, your spouse, and/or children. Does your income fall below the income amounts listed below?  □ Yes  □ No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of People In Household</th>
<th>Gross Income Per Month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$ 931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$ 1,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>$ 1,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>$ 1,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$ 2,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$ 2,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>$ 2,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>$ 3,221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you answered “Yes” to Questions 7 AND 8, you may be eligible for food stamps.

□ I would like more information about the Simply Good Eating Program.
□ I would like more information about food stamps.